

A
C H A R G E
DELIVERED TO THE
C L E R G Y
OF THE
DIOCESE OF LINCOLN.

[Price Eighteen Pence.]



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A

C H A R G E

DELIVERED TO THE

C L E R G Y

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LINCOLN,

AT THE

TRIENNIAL VISITATION OF THAT DIOCESE

In MAY and JUNE 1794.

BY GEORGE PRETYMAN, D. D. F. R. S.
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

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1794.

O H A R K E

C L E R G Y

DIOCESE OF LINCOLN



TO
THE CLERGY
OF THE
DIOCESE OF LINCOLN,
THIS CHARGE,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS INSCRIBED,

BY
THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND
AND BROTHER,

G. LINCOLN.

B

THE CITY
OF LINCOLN
THIS CHARGE
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST
BY
THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND
AND PROTECTOR
G. LINCOLN



A

C H A R. G E, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

THE astonishing events, which have taken place in a neighbouring kingdom since I last addressed you, and the general alarm which lately existed in this country, cannot but have attracted your notice. Our dearest interests, as men and as Christians, were brought into considerable danger: and though that danger was, through the Providence of God, happily averted; yet the present state of public affairs is such, as to engage the anxious attention of every one

who has a just regard for the internal Peace, and established Religion, of his country.

THE exertions of the Parochial Clergy are always of great importance to the welfare of the community: but your care and diligence will be in the highest degree useful at the present critical and eventful period. As it is your general office to instruct the people committed to your charge in every branch of their duty, so you are more especially called upon to caution them against the follies and faults which the circumstances of the times render most to be dreaded, against "those sins which do most easily beset them*." I feel it therefore incumbent upon me, to submit to you such observations, as naturally result from comparing present occurrences with the history of former times, from endeavouring to trace the dangers with which we have been threatened to their primary cause, and from estimating the principles from which they have originated, by the infallible criterion of the Word of God.

THE faculties with which the human species are endowed, and the wants to which they are liable, equally indicate that they were designed by their Creator for a state of Society †: we may therefore justly denominate Society, the Ordinance of God. And as subordination of ranks is essential to the

* Heb. xii. 1.

† Vide Wollaston's Religion of Nature, sect. 7.

formation

formation and maintenance of Society, we may also consider the different stations, which are to be found in every civil Society, as derived from the same Divine appointment. Nor would it be possible, that men should continue united, without the establishment of some species of political power *. It was the declaration of one of the most enlightened of the Roman sages, that without government, neither house, nor city, nor nation, nor mankind, nor the world itself, could subsist †.

WHILST the Heathen perceived, that subordination of ranks was essential to the existence of Society, and that the coercion of laws was necessary to protect the innocent, and to defend the weak, they were convinced of the inadequacy of authority, merely human, for the complete accomplishment of these great and important ends. They saw the necessity of a more powerful principle, to restrain the licentiousness of the multitude, and to control those vicious inclinations which endanger public security. They observed, that the minds of men were naturally disposed to receive religious impressions; and the most celebrated of the antient legislators wisely availed themselves of this propensity, to

* Τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἀναγκαίων ἀρχῶν χωρὶς ἀδυνατοὶ εἶναι πόλιν. ARIST. Pol. Lib. vi. Cap. 8. Magistratibus autem opus est, sine quorum prudentiâ ac diligentia esse civitas non potest. CICERO de Leg. Lib. iii.

† Nihil porro tam aptum est ad jus conditionemque Naturæ (quod cum dico, legem a me dici, nihil aliud, intelligi volo) quam Imperium; sine quo nec domus ulla, nec civitas, nec gens, nec hominum universum genus stare, nec rerum natura omnis, nec ipse mundus potest. CIC. ibidem.

inspire respect for their laws, and to secure obedience to the government which they established *. With this view they pretended to have intercourse with some Deity, from whom they professed to have received their laws †, and endeavoured to keep this persuasion alive, and through its means to strengthen the bonds of civil union, by erecting temples, and instituting ceremonies, in honour of those gods, under whose protection they affected to place their political as well as religious rights, and whom they represented as the avengers and rewarders of human actions. And whoever is conversant with the remains of Grecian and Roman literature, cannot but know, that the same doctrines are inculcated, upon the same grounds, by authors of every denomination; by Poets, Orators, Historians, and Philosophers. We learn, indeed, from the concurrent testimony of the wise and experienced of every age and of every country, living under all the varied forms of political government, and judging from an intimate acquaintance with the tempers and dispositions of mankind; that religious principles have ever been considered as indispensably necessary for supporting the civil magistrate in the execution of his office, and for the general purpose of preserving order and tranquillity in the State ‡.

THE

* Ut quos ratio non posset, eos ad officium Religio duceret. Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. i. Sect. 42.

† Vide Ryan's History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind, Sect. 1.

‡ Sit igitur hoc jam principio persuasum civibus, Dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores Deos; eaque quæ gerantur, eorum geri ditione ac numine, eisdemque

THE learned Bishop Warburton, in stating the opinions of the antient Sages respecting the necessity of Religion to the well-being of Society, thus expresses himself: " They " too," says he, " as well as the lawgivers, were unanimous " in this point, how discordant soever and at variance " amongst themselves in other matters. Whatever system " of policy the Historian favoured; whatever theory of " nature the Philosopher espoused, this always remained " an unquestionable principle. The Favourer of arbitrary " Power deemed it the strongest bond of blind obedience; " and the Friend of Civil Liberty, the largest source of virtue " and of public spirit. The Atheist, from the vastness of its " social use, concluded Religion to be but an invention of " State; and the Theist, from that confessed utility, laboured " to prove it of Divine original. To give the reader,"

eosdémque optimè de genere humano mereri; et qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, quâ mente, quâ pietate colat Religiones, intueri; piorúmque et impiorum habere rationem: his enim rebus imbutæ mentes haud sanè abhorrebunt ab utili ac verâ sententiâ. Quid est enim verius, quam neminem esse oportere tam stultè arrogantem, ut in se rationem et mentem putet inesse, in cœlo mundóque non putet? Aut ut ea, quæ vix summâ ingenii ratione comprehendat, nullâ ratione moveri putet? Quem verò astrorum ordines, quem dierum noctiúmque vicissitudines, quem mensium temperatio, quémque ea, quæ gignantur nobis ad fruendum, non gratum esse cogant; hunc hominem omninò numerari quî decet? Cúmque omnia, quæ rationem habent, præstent iis quæ sint rationis expertia, nefâsque sit dicere, ullam rem præstare naturæ omnium rerum; rationem inesse in eâ confitendum est. Utiles autem esse has opiniones quis neget, cùm intelligat, quàm multa firmentur jurejurando; quantæ salutis sint fœderum Religiones; quàm multos divini supplicii metus a scelere revocarit; quámque sancta sit societas civium inter ipsos, Diis immortalibus interpositis, tum iudicibus tum testibus. Cic. de Leg. Lib. ii. Sect. 7.

continues he, " a detail of the discourses, where this truth
 " is owned and supported, would be to transcribe anti-
 " quity ; for with this begins and ends every thing they
 " teach and explain, of morals, government, human nature,
 " and civil policy *."

If we search the page of antiquity, or call to mind the transactions of later periods ; if we look into the history of the whole human race, we shall in vain seek for a civilised nation, in which some notion of a Deity has not prevailed, and in which the ruling powers, by whatever title they were distinguished, have not been studious to encourage some form of religious worship †. It was reserved for the disgrace, and for the punishment, of the present times, to see the government of a populous and powerful kingdom usurped by a set of men, who have publicly and deliberately said, There is no God ; who have born testimony to their unbelief, by an avowal of principles truly congenial with this impious declaration, by a long catalogue of crimes unparalleled in the annals of the world.

MAN is a religious, as well as a social, creature ; and the Author of our existence has so blended these properties of

* Div. Leg. B. 3.

† It was a frequent saying of Cromwell, " That no temporal government " could have a sure support without a national church that adhered to it."—Burnet's Summary of Affairs before the Restoration, prefixed to the History of his own Times.

our nature, and has so interwoven their respective duties, that the comforts of social life cannot be secured without a general prevalence of Religion. What God has joined together, man cannot separate without introducing confusion and misery. "Religione sublatâ, perturbatio vitæ sequitur, et magna confusio. Atque haud scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublatâ, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus justitia, tollatur *."—"Were it not," says an eminent writer of our own country, "for that sense of virtue, which is principally preserved, so far as it is preserved, by national forms and habits of Religion, men would soon lose it all, run wild, prey upon one another, and do whatever else the worst of savages do †."

WE might reasonably have expected, that the cruelties and sufferings experienced in France, would have excited universal detestation and terror; and by operating as a warning to the inhabitants of this country, would have made them all more gratefully sensible of the blessings they enjoy, and have silenced every species of murmur and discontent. But the example of that devoted kingdom, although it has called forth a very general expression of attachment to our excellent constitution, and an active zeal in the support of public tranquillity, yet has not produced

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. i. Sect. 2.

† Wollaston's Religion of Nature, Sect. 5.

these effects to the extent which might have been wished. It is well known that the success, which for some time attended the arms of the French, gave fresh vigour to the disaffected amongst us, and encouraged them to be more daring in their attempts to sow the seeds of discord, and to weaken the ties of civil and religious obligation. Publications of the most alarming tendency have been circulated with unwearied industry, and every endeavour has been used, under the plausible pretext of reform, to excite an ardour for licentious innovation, and to destroy every principle of political subordination. Not only the tenets and discipline of the Established Church have been attacked with indecent asperity, but all the leading doctrines of the Gospel have been called in question. The Divinity and Atonement of our Saviour, the Personality and Operation of the Holy Spirit, the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and the Expediency of Public Worship, have been seriously denied. And, such is the connexion between licentious opinions upon Religion and upon Government, that those, who have been most eager to rob Christianity of all its valuable and discriminating sanctions, have been the most active in their endeavours to destroy those distinctions, which are the basis of civil authority. Our ancestors of the last century had frequent opportunities of observing the close alliance between Popery and Despotism; and we, who live at the end of the eighteenth century, have seen the Disciples of Socinus amongst the most zealous abettors of Republican Principles.

THIS

THIS union of religious and political sentiments, in these two remarkable instances, will not excite much surprise in minds accustomed to mark the springs of human actions, and to trace the dependence and analogy subsisting between the principles, which actuate the conduct, and influence the judgment of men, upon different occasions. Surely it may be expected that they, who, upon subjects of Religion, contend for an implicit submission to their ecclesiastical rulers, who refuse the common people the liberty of consulting the Scriptures, and who consider their priests as vested with the powers of indulgence and absolution, should be advocates for passive obedience to their civil governors. We here see the same blind subjection of the understanding, the same slavish compliance of the will, under the kindred yokes of tyranny and superstition. And, in like manner, we may expect, that they, who, denying the necessity of a propitiatory Sacrifice, presumptuously lay claim to eternal happiness upon the ground of their own merit; and who degrade the character of the Divine Jesus into that of mere man, should endeavour to destroy all superiority in their fellow-creatures, and seek the gratification of their pride in the abolition of all worldly distinctions. The same captious and restless spirit, which leads men to cavil at the articles of our religious faith, and to reject the mysteries of the Gospel, because they surpass their comprehension, causes them to be dissatisfied with our civil constitution, and to represent its essential parts as useless and dangerous, because they do not agree with their own imaginary ideas of unat-

tainable perfection. We here again observe the same temper of mind directed to different objects, a similar error in judging of the dispensations of God, and of the institutions of men: and this natural alliance between certain opinions in matters of Church and State, can alone account for the events of former and modern times.

WHILE we admit the wisdom and justice of the moderation exercised towards those who dissent from our national faith, we cannot but lament, that the tolerating spirit of our government should have been abused to this gross and dangerous degree. We have seen men of cultivated minds, and of general decency of character, led astray by a vain philosophy; and, under the allowed freedom of discussion, propagating opinions inimical to the peace of society, and subversive of all Religion. These instances, which cannot but give concern to every serious person, afford the strongest proof of the vanity, and even mischief, of all human acquirements, without the directing influence of a sound faith. The most brilliant talents, the most improved understandings, if they do not act under the salutary guidance of religious principle, may become a curse, instead of a blessing.

To writers of this description we must ascribe the original cause of the present disorders in France. The Deistical works, which have abounded for many years in that unhappy

happy country, by weakening the authority of Revelation, and by ridiculing the idea of a Moral Governor of the world, and of responsibility in a future state, gradually destroyed all sense of religion, left the minds of the unwary without any protection against the insidious arts of wicked and ambitious men, and prepared the way for those scenes of devastation and blood, which have been the boast and triumph of these inhuman Atheists. This is the real foundation of all that France has experienced, of all that England has feared.

THERE is one material difference between Popery and Protestantism, which I am willing to think furnishes some ground for hope, that Englishmen can never be guilty of such enormities as have been committed in France. It is among the maxims of Popery, by forbidding the reading of the Scriptures, and by performing the religious services in an unknown language, to keep the lower ranks of mankind in extreme ignorance: hence, their minds, enslaved by a blind superstition, are peculiarly liable to receive any evil impressions, and they become, in the hands of ill-designing men, fit instruments for the worst of purposes. But, can it be believed, that persons, whose minds have been enlarged and improved by the mild and benevolent spirit of the Gospel, who have been accustomed to join in the truly devout prayers of our admirable Liturgy, and who have imbibed a just sense of their duty from the unerring

Word of God; can it be believed, that men brought up in these habits, and blessed with these advantages, will ever divest themselves of the common feelings of humanity, set at defiance the Majesty of Heaven, and trample upon all the sacred obligations of morality and religion?

AND here, let us gratefully acknowledge the Providence of God in the seasonable institution of Sunday-schools, which seem mercifully designed as an antidote against the prevailing temper of the times. This excellent mode of instruction claims, my Reverend Brethren, your especial protection and encouragement at the present moment, as the means best calculated for diffusing a general knowledge of the Scriptures among the inferior classes of society, and for instilling into their minds just notions of their religious duty. This is the most effectual method of preventing turbulence and discontent, and of securing a due obedience to the civil magistrate. A good Christian cannot be a bad Citizen. Whoever is sincerely religious towards God from conscience and principle, will also, from conscience and principle, be loyal to his earthly sovereign, obedient to the laws, and faithful to the government under which God has placed him. Though our Saviour's kingdom is not of this world, yet the Gospel tends, in the highest degree, to promote the peace and welfare of the community*. "Hæc

* There was never found in any age of the world, either philosophy, or sect, or religion, which did so highly exalt the public good, as the Christian Faith.

Lord BACON.

"est

" est Christianismi regula, hæc illius exacta definitio, hic
 " vertex supra omnia eminens, publicæ utilitati consulere."
 There is strong reason to believe, that of those, who at
 the present moment hold unconstitutional principles, and
 are diligent in exciting a discontented and factious spirit
 in the nation, a very large proportion are persons, either
 totally destitute of religion, or whose sentiments differ very
 widely from the doctrines and discipline of the established
 church*.

It is scarcely possible, that any one should so far mistake
 the meaning of what I have now said, as to suppose that
 I wish to encourage political discussions in the pulpit, or
 that you should take an active part in what are commonly
 called Party Politics: such a conduct would be, in the
 highest degree, unworthy your character as Clergymen, and
 could not be reprobated with too great severity. The pre-
 sent contest indeed is not, whether a greater or less degree
 of power should be placed in any particular branch of the
 Legislature; or whether this or that set of men be more
 worthy of the public confidence. The points now at issue
 are, whether there shall be any government, any order,
 any religion. While the enemies of our present and future
 peace are, with unremitting assiduity, endeavouring to per-

* We find the following remarkable passage in Bishop Burnet's Summary :
 " Many of the Republicans began to profess Deism; and almost all of them were
 " for destroying all clergymen, and for breaking every thing that looked like
 " the union of a National Church."

vert the understandings and pollute the minds of all who listen to their wicked sophistry, can it be the duty of the Ministers of the Gospel of Truth and Purity, to view these impious attempts with unconcern and indifference? Are we in silence to behold the subversion of all government, the extinction of all religion? Are we not rather called upon, by every means in our power, to expose and counteract the pernicious tendency of these insidious doctrines, which, under the abused names of liberty, reason, and philosophy, strike at the fundamental principles of every thing which has ever been esteemed valuable and sacred amongst men, and inevitably lead to all the miseries of anarchy and atheism? If our Saviour himself condescended to deliver this precept, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*;" if his inspired Apostles commanded their followers "to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates†, and to submit themselves to every ordinance of man‡, and earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints||;" surely it cannot be unbecoming the present dispensers of God's holy word, to explain to their hearers the religious grounds of civil obedience, and the duty of quiet submission to their lawful governors; and above all, it must be incumbent upon them, as the foundation of every hope, to use their best exertions for

* Luke, xx. 25.

† Titus, iii. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

|| Jude, 3.

the preservation of our pure and excellent religion, which they have engaged to teach and to defend. Christianity teaches us, that its end is human happiness; and "having the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come *," it exhorts "that prayers and supplications be made for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God †." Let these clear and unequivocal precepts induce men to search the Scriptures still farther, and they will find the general principles of the Gospel in direct opposition to the systems of modern innovators. They will there learn, that God himself makes one man to differ from another; that the distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, are the appointments of Divine Providence, and are made the sources of various duties, the bonds of mutual affection. The Evangelical virtues of compassion, gratitude, and humility, can be practised only where there is a diversity of ranks; and a contentious and turbulent spirit can never be reconciled with the Gospel graces of gentleness, forbearance, and contentment. Our Saviour not only forbade every species of injury and revenge, but required, as indispensable, a meek and lowly mind, an active and universal benevolence. The visionary schemes, which have been lately propagated, lead to tumult and dissension; the voice of the Divine Jesus invites to peace

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

† 1 Tim. ii. 2.

and harmony ; the former hold out no reward but the precarious chance of a better worldly situation ; the latter promises the certainty of infinite and everlasting recompense *. Let the Infidels of France be deaf to such considerations ; but may the Christians of Great Britain, through your care and wisdom, choose " that good part which shall not be taken from them † ! " and may God, who is the author of peace and lover of concord, make you the happy instruments of knitting together all orders of men in unfeigned love and mutual confidence, and of securing to them those hopes and consolations, which Religion alone can afford !

* Vide Man's best Right, by the Rev. R. Nares, p. 23.

† Luke, x. 42.

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F I N I S.

